

The World's Greatest Book

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THIS is the age of books. Many flood the earth. More men read and the thirst for information and entertainment is insatiable. This thirst demands satisfaction and thousands of writers answer the demand with every form of thought and expression. The world does not produce enough paper to record all that men want to print. Books are as numerous as the stars, but few of them have the life of a star. Passing away is written upon everything human, but it is written large on books. Out of the avalanche that slides from the press, only an occasional book survives. A few live for a decade, fewer for a century, but only a masterpiece lives for a thousand years. Rare is the year which produces even a single book which deserves to live. Yet there is one book which lives forever. It is ever ancient, ever new. It has influenced every age and every reader in every age. It has the reverence of millions, who regard it as the Word of God and the respect of other millions, who deny its Divine character but admire it for purely human reasons. It is not necessary to name that book. Of course, it is the Bible. It is not only the oldest book in the world, it is the holiest, the wisest and the best; in fact, it reflects the nature of its author, and that author, we know, is God.

The Bible is not merely a book; it is a library. It is a collection of seventy-two books. They were written at various times, under various circumstances and for various purposes. The history of some is buried in a mist so deep that no eye can penetrate it, while the story of others is as well known as the profane books which came into existence at or about the same period.

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The former deals with that long period of development in which man came into existence and passed from the family into the tribes, the nations and the races which peopled the earth and made history up to the birth of Christ. The second tells the story of the coming of Him who redeemed the world and organized

the Church to continue and perfect the work He had begun.

The Old Testament is subdivided into three classes of books: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. We might arrange them under the heads of History, Biography, Prophecy, Poetry and Philosophy; but the former arrangement is sacred and it is the one Biblical scholars usually follow.

The New Testament is subdivided into the Gospels, a history called the Acts of the Apostles, the various Epistles and the Apocalypse. The Old Testament contains what we may call Hebrew literature; the New forms the early Christian literature. Together they preserve and present the record of God's dealings with man. The two are really one, for the New Testament complements the Old. It presents the same doctrines, the same facts, the same customs, and even employs the same terms and expressions. They have the same purpose, the same sacred character. The Old Testament shows that man cannot live without God; the New Testament shows God in the world, redeeming and saving.

The Bible is called the Word of God—God's message; or, as St. Augustine says, "God's letter to man." Thus the name reveals the author. It is true, the various books in the Bible bear names indicating human authors, but they are only the agents of the Lord, who employed them to bear His message, or reveal His will to the people. The primary author of every book and every part of each book is the Holy Spirit, under whose inspiration the sacred penmen wrote. This brings up two points which no one can escape who presumes to treat of the Bible. They are revelation and inspiration.

THE BIBLE REVEALED BY GOD.

Modern critics deny the fact, and even the possibility of Revelation. Most of them, in fact, deny the existence of a personal God, of the supernatural, and of anything which man cannot weigh and measure. The Church teaches that God can, and as a matter of fact has spoken to man. She teaches what St. Paul declared in his Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers

by the Prophets, last of all, in these days, hath spoken to us by his Son."

It is generally accepted that there is nothing in a work which is not eminently in the one who conceived and produced it. Assuming the fact of creation, it follows that the nature of man reflects the nature of the Creator, and that there is no power, faculty or instinct in man which is not radically and eminently in God. If man can communicate his thoughts, his hopes, his feelings, to other men, it must be admitted that God can communicate His to man. Speech is a human characteristic. It exists only in man. It is a singular perfection. He uses it to express his thoughts. There is an instinct which urges man to speak. He hates silence and he longs for company, for other men with whom he may converse. Human nature is not a lifeless rock. It is a living spring. Life is action and one of the simplest actions is speech. Goodness is a human attribute and it is of the nature of goodness to overflow. "Goodness is diffusive of itself," say the philosophers. It moved God to create the world and it makes man long to share his goods with other men. That which impels the child to lend his toy or share his apple, urges man to share his goods, to tell his thoughts, his experiences, his inventions. Not only does he tell them but he uses writing to preserve and transmit them.

This simple fact will, perhaps, do much to make clear the possibility, the probability, and the reasonableness of revelation. But when we take into account the fact that God has created us for a supernatural end, we must conclude that He has provided all we need to know in order to recognize that end and its importance, and to choose the means which He has provided to enable us to reach it.

When we read the story of God's dealings with our first parents we recognize His plan and purpose. We find that He did not turn man adrift when He sent him into the world or leave him to grope his way through life, to find out for himself his duties and his dangers, and finally reach some destination. Far from it. God walked with them in Paradise. He talked with them. Not merely did He flood their mind with light, He distinctly told them what to do and what to avoid. When

*Preservation
of
Revelation*

they fell, one of their punishments was the loss of God as their friend. No longer did He walk with them and talk with them, as it were, face to face. He spoke but rarely from afar and not always directly. As time went on He sent prophets to whom He made known His will and who came with this message: "Thus sayeth the Lord!" These messages the people received with reverence and kept with the greatest care. The question arises as to how these messages were preserved and transmitted. First of all we must recognize the fact that if God could send the message He could find a way to preserve it, and we know that He could and did interpose miraculously to prevent the loss of the truths He revealed. But let us see if these were not natural means which could account for the preservation. It is not fair to judge human memory by the faculty we know and use. Human faculties lose their strength when they are not exercised. The sight which enables the savage to discern traces which our eyes cannot detect loses its keenness when it is not exercised. So the memory, which has so many helps in our age, is not nearly so strong as it was when men relied upon it and had none of the aids we enjoy. Hence it is that folklore has kept alive in songs and stories facts and sayings which have never been put in writing. Speech precedes writing and tradition is one of the channels of revelation. Parents told their children what they knew and these handed them down as a precious inheritance. The great facts of the creation, the fall, the deluge, the dispersion; the great truths indicating the law of the Lord, the vocation of man, the promise of the Redeemer—these were so simple and, at the same time, so precious that mere memory could easily retain and transmit them. So that even before writing was invented—and who will say just when that art came into use?—the important facts and truths were kept in the world. The first book in the Bible is the work of Moses. He lived about 1300 years before Christ and 1700 years after the creation. But in those days men lived to a great age. In view of this, the story of the creation and fall, which Adam, no doubt, told to his children, would reach Moses a thousand years later with only one or two interruptions.

But oral tradition is not the only channel through which

revelation flows. There is writing. The earliest written records have, no doubt, been lost. But we know that man began very early to try to preserve and transmit his thoughts and his experience. As early as the captivity, the Jews kept written records of their national life, of their wrongs, their laws and their customs. The famous Code of Hammurabi, discovered only recently, shows that at least 500 years before the time of Moses there were people who wrote their laws and thus preserved them for others. Of course, the early writing was crude and imperfect. It was signs and symbols cut into stone or impressed upon bricks or tiles or scenes painted upon walls, but it was at least a record which preserved truth and handed it down from age to age. Thus perishes the objection of those who say that until the time of Moses there were no reliable records and that the only history available was legend and myth. The word of God has been preserved and handed down without substantial loss or corruption through oral tradition, and through written records. Some has been preserved in one way, some in the other, and some again in both ways, but it all comes down to us as the genuine message from Heaven. While the Bible contains those truths which God wishes to transmit in writing, it does not contain all the truths which God has revealed, nor is every truth in the Bible a revealed truth. Many truths have come to the knowledge of the inspired writers through natural channels. Yet, those truths naturally acquired become sacred because they are written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who avails Himself of the human agent, with all the knowledge and skill that agent possesses, to convey truth to men. As the Church declares, all the books in the Bible have God for their author.

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

The complement of revelation is inspiration. It is necessary to have an accurate knowledge of the nature of this second element properly to appreciate the Bible. Most of the misunderstandings and controversies about Biblical matters come from the confusion of revelation and inspiration.

Two cardinal principles must always be in the mind and regulate the judgment of the Catholic Biblical student: I. The declaration of the Vatican Council, "These books are held by the Church as sacred and canonical, not because having been composed by human effort and afterward approved by her authority, nor merely because they contain revelation without error, but because being written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author and have been transmitted to the Church as such." II. The following extract from the famous Encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus*: "The Holy Ghost himself, by his supernatural power, stirred up and impelled the Biblical writers to write, and assisted them while they were writing in such a manner that they conceived in their minds exactly, and determined to commit to writing faithfully, and render in exact language, with infallible truth, all that God commanded and nothing else; without that, God would not be the author of Scripture in its entirety."

Inspiration is the ground on which most Biblical battles have been fought. Every once in a while some new theory appears, and has its day only to fade and disappear. Even in the Church, there have been controversies. Honest men often disagree and, so long as their contentions do not conflict with faith or morals, the Church serenely contemplates these discussions. But the moment they touch those vital nerves of truth, she speaks with no uncertain voice. As recently as 1893, Mons. d' Hulst, rector of the Catholic Institute, Paris, published an article on this subject in which he favored the opinion that inspiration was limited to matters of faith and morals and had nothing to do with the facts of history or natural science, as they appear in the Bible. At once Leo XIII condemned him and in the great Encyclical, quoted above, said: "It will never be lawful to restrict inspiration to certain parts of the Scriptures or to grant that the sacred writer could have made a mistake. Nor can the Church tolerate the opinion of those who teach that Divine inspiration extends only to matters of faith and morals."

The Catholic view of inspiration is, therefore, very precise—narrow, our critics call it. But we must bear

it in mind that truth is always narrow, every standard is exact. If the architect's plan calls for one-eighth of an inch, one-fourth will not do, nor will one-sixteenth suffice. Every principle must be exact. The Church declares that inspiration is a Divine impulse given to the will of some individual whom God has chosen for the work, influencing him effectually yet not interfering with his liberty so as to compel or force him and determining him to write all that God wants him to write, when, where and as God wants it written. Inspiration involves not merely the impulse to write, but assistance in writing. This assistance aids the writer to collect his material, as an ordinary author would gather material for a history or a biography, and it prevents him from making mistakes in his data or in his expression. It takes that writer as he is, with all his natural gifts or defects and accomplishments or limitations. It does not affect the style of his composition. In that he retains his own characteristics. His work will be eloquent or prosy, clear or obscure, according to his ability. It does not determine just what words he is to employ, so long as he sets forth the truth so that the average reader can comprehend it. It does, however, in the opinion of many scholars, determine certain words and expressions which may be necessary to set forth a doctrine or define a principle. It does not insure the writer against personal effort, nor does it guarantee the perfection of his work, from an artistic point of view. While God is the principal cause of the Bible, the writer is not without causality. He, at least, injects into his work his personality—not his personal views or feelings, but that personal touch, which critics can trace and by which they can identify his work.

WHAT IS THE CANON?

A third question must be discussed in any paper which aims to set forth the nature and excellence of the Bible. It is the matter of the Canon.

Canon is a Greek word which literally means a reed, but which signifies, from its use, a measure or rule. It is used in Biblical works to indicate the official and authoritative collection of books which the Synagogue or

the Church recognizes as composed under Divine guidance and destined for the instruction of the Church—taking Church here in the sense of that society, which began with God's revelation of Himself to Israel, which developed in the words and works of Christ and which was finally completed by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

It may be worth while to trace the process by which a writing gained a place in the Canon. Naturally, when man received a message from God, he counted it precious and he took means to preserve it and transmit it to his posterity. Presuming that there was no other way to keep it alive, he told it to his children and to his friends, and they in turn imparted to their relatives and friends some sign that he really came from God. Such a sign was never wanting and miracles have always been the credentials of those who claimed to be messengers from heaven. In proof of this it is only necessary to call to mind the persistent question which the Jews put to Our Lord: "What sign dost thou give?" the long train of miracles with which He proved His claims, and, finally, the great challenge: "If you will not believe me, believe my works; they give testimony concerning me." The advent of a prophet, his message, and His miracles were so extraordinary that no one could forget them. Those who witnessed them would tell them to their children, and they in turn would hand them down to others. When writing came into use, it would be employed to record and transmit this precious information. It would become a public record, find its way into the history of the nation and be recounted with pride on the great anniversaries and occasions. But the story of which we speak was deeply religious. It concerned the faith and conduct of the people. In fact, it entered into the very life of the nation, for Israel was a church. It was founded to keep alive in the world the knowledge of the One True God, to worship Him as He directed, and above all, to cherish faith and hope in the Redeemer who was to come and save His People. The priest was therefore the guardian of revelation, the temple was its shrine, and, on festival days it was the food of the people. Nothing was so dear to the people as their Scriptures. To them, they were what the Blessed Sacrament is to us. When there was

fire or danger, the first thing to be saved was the sacred rolls on which were inscribed the Law and the Prophets. They copied them with the greatest care, kept these copies in their homes, wore them on their person, and willed them to their children. They bore them into captivity and in the land of the stranger they found comfort and inspiration in reading the glories of their fathers and the promises of the Almighty. When Moses wrote the Pentateuch, he found a collection of Scripture annals and records which were the accumulation of ages. Inspired by the Lord, he sifted them, arranged them, and completed them, so that when he died, there was in Israel a body of Scripture which was official and authentic. In 621 B. C. the Book of the Law was discovered in the Temple. King Josias proclaimed it and with his people entered into a solemn pact to observe it. The whole Mosaic code was arranged finally by Esdras in 440 B. C., but the Jewish Canon was not completed until somewhere between 165 B. C. and 150 A. D. Suffice it to say that when Our Lord came into the world, He found an authoritative body of Scripture which He read and to which He constantly appealed, giving it the stamp of His Divine approval.

History, they say, repeats itself. The story of the Old Testament is so old that it has been called legend and conjecture. But the formation and development of the New Testament is so recent and at the same time so similar that its story has silenced many objections.

Our Lord, so far as we know, wrote nothing, and while He was on the earth He gave no order to anyone to write. He came to preach and He sent His Apostles to preach. For at least twenty-five years after His death there was not one written line of the New Testament. Until then all we know of Our Lord, of His words and of His works existed only in the memory of those who saw Him and heard Him. About the year 54 the writing began and year after year developed until it was completed in the Apocalypse. "Christian life and doctrine are the development of Jewish. For at least twenty-five years the Church had no written documents. She lived on the recollection of Christ and on the preaching of the Apostles and Disciples and on the Jewish Scrip-

tures and traditions." In her bosom these two elements were fused into that New Testament which is the fragmentary work of half a century and a synopsis of all revelation as well as a history of Christ.

In the year 68 Sts. Peter and Paul met their death. That blow brought out the fact that soon there would be no one who could say "What our eyes have seen and our hands have touched, of these things do we testify." It moved the Church to gather and preserve all authentic testimony. As the Jews had collected the annals of their race and the words of the Lord, so did the Church gather the data and the doctrine of the Apostles. They regarded them as inspired and read them at their meetings and wove them into their liturgy, counting them a sacred trust which no man might change or corrupt. The Jews kept their Scriptures in the Temple. The early Christians had no place to keep theirs, but they carried them into the catacombs and even into the prisons until persecution ceased. Then they built churches and produced the treasured writings.

HOW THE CHURCH SAVED THE BIBLE.

In the second century an attempt was made to arrange and authenticate all Scripture. Every church was ordered to produce and submit every manuscript it possessed. The work of authentication was difficult. It involved the examination and verification of every manuscript submitted. How long it took to do this we do not know, but we do know that the fourth century had arrived before the Church proclaimed the work's completion. Though the collection was complete, it needed revision. The New Testament was written in three languages—Syro-Chaldaic, Hebrew and Greek. Each author used his own tongue, his own style and presented his message in his own way. As the Church spread, it became necessary to translate the message into the language of the people. The Old Testament had been done into Greek by the famous College of Twenty. The Church adopted that version and translated it and the New Testament into Latin for the Christians of the Roman Empire who could not read Greek. This translation was again and again translated and copied until of

translations, versions and copies there was no end. Again the Church assumed the Herculean task of verification and redaction. She collected every extant copy and edition, examined them anew, verified them, and chose from among them those which seemed best to render the meaning of the original. These she published in what we call the Latin Vulgate. That work was done by St. Jerome, of whom we are told by Dr. Wescott, "he was the only man in 1,500 years who was able to do the work." That edition is really the work of his life. It is the greatest monument a man has ever raised and the richest inheritance a man has ever left. This is the official Bible of the Church. It was produced in the fourth century, but it was only after 1,200 years of study, investigation and correction that the Council of Trent proclaimed it and required that in future every edition of the Bible must conform with it.

This shows the zeal of the Church to keep the Bible pure. To make it known to the people, she weaves it into all her official documents, reads it in all her services and encourages them not only to read it, but to keep it in their homes and even to wear it on their person. She translated it into every known tongue and in spite of denials the fact remains that prior to the publication of Luther's first Bible in 1534, there were in Germany at least thirty editions of the Catholic Bible in German. In his "History of Literature" Hallam tells us that the Bible was the first book printed and soon it appeared in every known language. Buckingham, a Protestant author, declares, "No sooner had human skill devised a means of book multiplication than they [the monks of the Middle Ages] at once engaged its co-operation and caused the Bible to issue in vast abundance from the press in almost every tongue spoken in the Christian world."

THE CHURCH INTERPRETS THE BIBLE.

The Bible belongs to the Church. He whose word it contains gave it to her to keep it, to preach it and teach it, to interpret it, translate it and guard it. It is the fruit of her labor. She preserved the Old Testament. She collected the manuscript of the New Testament, when, but for her, they would have perished. She copied them

when, but for her, they would have become illegible. She verified and authenticated everything she adopted where it was possible to reach sources which have long since been lost. She has translated the Bible into every tongue and given it to every known nation. She has been doing this work for 1,600 years, but she has always kept the written word subordinate to the spoken. In this she has followed the example and the command of her Founder.

The Bible is indeed the Word of God, but no man can know what is the Bible unless he has the word of the Church to render him certain. We love the Bible because it is true and we love it because it is God's message. But we regard it as a text-book which needs a teacher, the teacher which the Lord sends in the Church. The Church has nothing new to say about the Bible. It is now what it was in the beginning, changed in form, but unchanged in substance and meaning. All that the world knows about the Bible it knows from the Church; the rest is opinion, conjecture and doubt. After all these years it is apparent that the Church is really the only friend the Bible has. While others are rejecting, condemning and denying, she is severely silent. While they are anxious, she is content. She knows, while they can only guess.

The Study of the Bible

D. LANSLOTS, O.S.B.

From the "Catholic Magazine."

THE history of the last few years, written in letters of blood across the greater part of the Old Continent, clearly shows to what consequences differences of opinion may lead. Certain inviolable principles were intended by the Creator to safeguard the political life of the world, and to secure unto men the attainment of their social privileges. The principles, plain as they may seem to some, are obscured, when man tries to take the place, which the Almighty reserved for Himself. The greatest men may meet and endeavor to solve the prob-

lems, affecting the social life of the world, only to find that their limitations prevent them from focusing the whole world into their own too small receptacle. God cannot and will not be ignored in the solution. Any attempt to do so will be frustrated or must lead to social bankruptcy.

Social dissension finds its origin in the deviation from the laws, enacted for man's welfare. Forgetfulness of our duty to God must inevitably lead to the dissolution of the whole social fabric, undermining as it does the very foundation. We are liable to believe that the sad occurrences of the past are in their suddenness like bolts from a clear sky; we forget that nothing happens without a sufficient cause.

While the saner part of humanity is stirring everywhere to heal the wounds inflicted, and to rebuild upon the ruins of society a civilization adapted to the needs of mankind according to the mind of the Creator, the few only inquire into the causes of this social disruption and of general chaos.

Some put to themselves the following question, without answering it: How are conditions such as are prevailing possible in professedly Christian countries? There was a time of a united Christianity facing all common enemies, but unfortunately this has given way to the divisions of the sixteenth century. Still all can meet on a common ground; all still do hold that God has on various occasions manifested His will to man; all do still believe that some of those manifestations are recorded in the Book of Books, and no doubt with proper study could still arrive at the same conclusions and eliminate among themselves differences of opinion, which have proved so disastrous in the past.

God has given us the Holy Bible; careful study will bring about unity of opinion on all necessary points; liberty on all points debatable, and restore charity to the Christian body. The written Word is part of the supernatural revelation of God to man. God has spoken to man first by the Prophets, then by His own Son and His Apostles. God is the author of the Sacred Book. Great is the excellence of the Scriptures; they contain mysteries, counsels and examples, all of supreme usefulness to man.

Precisely on account of its dignity and excellence, the Sacred Book cannot be compared with nor treated as other productions of the pen. Inspired as they are by the Holy Ghost, they contain all-important, hidden and difficult things, for the right intelligence of which we need the light of that same Holy Spirit.

There are those who think that each one should be his own interpreter of the Book, and reject oral tradition and the authority of the Church's teaching as helps to right understanding; for some it is the only source of revelation and the supreme judge of faith. The Rationalists go a step farther and deny all revelation and inspiration; for them the Scriptures are only the rambling of an hysterical author, they do not present the true narratives of facts, but distorted historical myths. Many are misled by the dictatorial show of these adepts of free science, free indeed to themselves, but most intolerant to their opponents. They endeavor by teaching and preaching to spread their deadly poison. All true Christians should earnestly oppose to this knowledge falsely so called the ancient and the only true knowledge, which the Church has received from Christ through the Apostles; they should all try to be sufficiently prepared to accept battle in defense of the Sacred Scriptures.

The true champion of the Sacred Book must be well trained in the art of dealing with the fallacies of his opponents. Thorough preparation would be the work of a lifetime; but to a lay mind a few hours of serious study would be sufficient to show up these fallacies in their main issues.

The Bible was not written originally in English or in Dutch; the authors of translations were not the inspired writers, whom God selected to leave that precious inheritance to mankind. Knowledge of the original languages is the privilege of the few, yet acceptance of a version should suppose comparison with the original. Will the ordinary man, in the supposition that he has the ability, find time to study all historical questions connected with the Sacred Book? Yet these also are of supreme importance to show how the Book originated, and how it came down in all its purity to us.

Our opponents blame the Book, and because of their

supposed knowledge of physical science, they accuse its authors of gross ignorance of such science. A dangerous bait to the untrained mind, too liable to be misled by outward show! It is well, therefore, that all Christians should have some knowledge of the laws governing nature, in order to be better prepared to repel the fallacies of knowledge falsely so called. No dissension is possible between the real theologian and the physical experts, as long as both remain within the limits of their own domains; as long as they will not give out for absolute truth what is merely a workable hypothesis.

In controversy the theologian will stick to the golden rules as laid down by St. Augustine; whatever the physicist will be able to demonstrate about the nature of things, the theologian must be able to prove that it clashes not with the Sacred Book; whatever the physicist asserts as contrary to revelation, the theologian must show up his mistake or reject the assertion as absolutely false. As the acquisition of the intricacies of physical science has no bearing on salvation, the Holy Ghost did not wish to give a treatise of it in the Holy Book.

Often research, persistent and laborious, into the monuments of antiquity, the customs and the laws of ancient nations, has no other scope but to find fault with the Scriptures and challenge their authority. The extraordinary part of it is that critical research, on the part of infidels, while always prepared to condemn the Bible, is ever ready to take too much for granted in profane books and ancient documents, as if no mistakes could have crept into these. It is quite possible that through the negligence of copyists minor mistakes may be found in the Holy Book; yet this cannot be admitted without proof and without subjecting these supposed errors to the best rules of interpretation.

In considering similar questions we must start from the unimpeachable principle that inspiration is not limited to certain portions only of the Bible, and that no error be attributed the sacred author; "because God, as the inspirer of the sacred writings, cannot be the author of any mistakes."

The Catholic Church has had always during her long history the highest regard for God's written Word. She

has at all times endeavored with all means at her disposal to safeguard its purity. Her Supreme Pastors have induced the Faithful to read it, and granted indulgences to encourage it.

Without going into the decrees of Popes and Councils governing the matter, we will show what the Church is doing at present for the advancement of Biblical studies. On October 30, 1902, Pope Leo XIII established the Biblical Commission, composed of some Cardinals and several Consultors. The duties of this Commission are: First, to defend and protect the integrity of the Faith in Catholic matters; secondly, to further the progress of exposition of the Sacred Books, taking account of all recent discoveries; thirdly, to decide controversies that may arise on grave questions among Catholic scholars; fourthly, to see that the Vatican Library is properly furnished with codices and necessary books; fifthly, to publish studies as occasion may demand. This Commission was empowered to confer degrees in Sacred Scripture; Pope Leo XIII, when appointing the Commission, also wished that a special Institute for higher Biblical studies should be established in Rome, but he had to leave it to his successor to put this into execution.

In the spring of 1907 Pius X determined to begin preparations for the revision of the Latin Bible. In spite of all the care that had been bestowed upon its text it had been recognized from the first that some day it would have to be revised. That same year the Benedictine Order was entrusted with the task of making the preparation. The scope of the Commission for the revision of the Vulgate was not to produce a Latin Bible but merely to make a preliminary step toward a new official version.

This Commission was to determine, as accurately as possible, the text of St. Jerome's Latin translation in the fourth century. The Latin version made prior to St. Jerome, in the first days of the Faith, made and copied without any official supervision, soon became corrupt and doubtful; there seemed to be as many readings as codices. St. Jerome was, therefore, ordered by Pope Damasus to check the translation by means of the original Greek, and to set out a new edition so revised and cor-

rected. All scholars practically agree as to the competence of St. Jerome for the work.

St. Jerome had opportunities to examine old manuscripts, which no other great Biblical interpreter ever had. The original translation of St. Jerome no longer exists, and so to recover the exact text from existing manuscripts is a task both difficult and delicate. This is, however, the work which must first be done, as the first step in the revision of the Latin Vulgate. Cardinal Gasquet, then Abbot-President of the English Benedictines, was appointed to head the Commission. An exhaustive examination was to be made of all manuscripts to be found in the libraries of Europe.

In addition to the above Commission Pius X, on May 7, 1909, put into execution the wish of his predecessor, and by apostolic letters founded the Biblical Institute in Rome. It was to be a center for higher studies concerning the Sacred Books, to promote Biblical scholarship, and all affiliated sciences. The teachers were selected from among the best Biblical scholars in the Society of Jesus. The best equipped minds were to be selected in the various nations, who, after a complete course of philosophy and theology, would devote several years to the study of the Bible to qualify them afterwards as teachers in Catholic schools or writers to defend Catholic doctrine.

Pope Benedict XV quite lately went a step further and founded a branch of the same Institute in the Holy City of Jerusalem in order to give both teachers and students still better opportunities. These Commissions and Institutes are contributions to Biblical science, from the Church considered as a whole, but it is not the limit of the Church's efforts. In every Catholic university there is a chair of Sacred Scripture; in every Catholic Seminary all over the world there is a four years' course of the same subject. All candidates for the priesthood have previously gone through a six years' course of Latin and Greek; most of them at the same time a course in Hebrew, so as to enable them to study the Bible properly. The monasteries, which in days of old transcribed and collected the Sacred Scriptures, contribute also their quota of Biblical scholars.

All this goes to show the intense desire of the Church to keep undefiled the purity of the written Word, and to have the world understand it in its true meaning. It sounds, therefore, most surprising to hear the Catholic Church accused of a lack of interest in the Holy Bible. But all books called the Holy Bible are not necessarily the Word of God. Who guarantees a proper translation? The guarantors in all cases were certainly not appointed by God to pass final judgment upon a translation. How dare a man call a translation in the Word of God when no properly constituted authority proclaims it as such? All Christians, in face of the common enemy of unbelief, should combine to uphold the purity of God's written message. Catholics above all should be able, not only to hold their own, but also to enlighten others who differ with them in matters of Faith.

The Catholic University in Tokio

THE TRANSLATION OF A LETTER SENT TO THE REV.
FATHER MARK J. McNEAL, S.J., BY HIS EMINENCE
CARDINAL VAN ROSSUM.

*The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the
Faith.*

Rome, Sept. 1, 1919.

Reverend Father:

This Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith is most anxious that the spread of the Christian Religion should by all timely means be promoted among the Japanese people who are an object of such great hope to the Church. Now keeping in view the character and civilization of that renowned race, nothing seems better able to bring about the desired result than the fostering of Catholic institutions, those of higher learning especially where the character of young people may be moulded by a combination of the liberal arts with Christian education.

Hence it was most gratifying to this Sacred Congregation when the members of the Society of Jesus at the instance of the Supreme Pontiff Pius X of holy memory some years ago undertook under happy auspices the es-

tablishment of a University in the City of Tokio, the Capital of the Japanese Empire. This institution deserves special commendation for the esteem and honor which it has brought to the Catholic Religion.

Yet this Sacred Congregation is well aware of the difficulties which this arduous undertaking must face and of the great sum of money necessary to the attainment of its aim, and is therefore most eager that the Catholic University in Tokio should be helped by the generous aid of the Faithful.

When this matter was brought to the attention of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XV by Divine Providence Pope, in an audience held on August 25th last, his Holiness who has the growth of the said University so deeply at heart expressed the wish that in his own name the Faithful of even remote nations should be aroused to aid by every means this noble Institution and deigned to impart his Apostolic Benediction to those who make contributions to it.

It is therefore to be hoped, Reverend Father, that the generous coöperation of the Faithful will not fail you, so that by the collection of necessary and suitable means the University in Tokio may not only endure and persevere in its present condition, but rise to that eminence which the state of our times and the needs of religion demand.

Meanwhile begging God to have you in His holy keeping, I am,

Devotedly yours,

G. M. CARDINAL VAN ROSSUM,

Prefect.

C. LAURENTI, *Secretary.*

Father McNeal is enjoying the hospitality of "America" at Campion House, 39 West 86th Street, New York, and will be pleased to answer any inquiries sent to that address about the scope and work of the Catholic University in Tokio.

The Old-Fashioned Mother

SENATOR DAVID I. WALSH.

If there were more old-fashioned mothers there would be fewer divorces, less family troubles, less of the kit-

chenette style of living. The old-fashioned mother stood for home, and she made that home a center of family life. She presided over it. The modern tendency of doing away with the establishment of home is unfortunate and results in many evils that were not apparent at the time of the old-fashioned mother. It is not what a woman appears that makes her motherly—it is what she is, and the manner in which she exerts the highest influence of womanhood. The old-fashioned mother was religious, charitable, unaffected, and she was just. These come pretty near being the all-important qualities and forces that make for a good woman—especially a mother. As I recall the old-fashioned mothers as I knew them in the country towns of Massachusetts some years ago, they have two absorbing desires—their love of home and their love of their neighbors. They made that home, and they made the family life. They made every sacrifice to train, develop and educate their children for useful and honorable places in the community life. They gave to their neighbors all of that which they had—in small ways, to be sure. And this meant their time and their health whenever there was need. The old-fashioned mother acted as nurse, as sympathizer, as servant in the home of her neighbors whenever there was distress, suffering or affliction. I am thinking of my own mother now. Whenever there was a new baby in the neighborhood she was there almost before the doctor. When affliction came to the neighbor's family she cooked for them, and she sympathized when death came to the door. She was the old-fashioned mother.